



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number: 3007896

Address: 5343 Tallman Ave NW

Applicant: Michael Hoffman and Carlos de la Torre, H+dIT Architects

Date of Meeting: Monday, May 09, 2011

Board Members Present: Jean Morgan (Chair)  
Jerry Coburn  
Mike Delila  
David Neiman

Board Members Absent: Ted Panton

DPD Staff Present: Lisa Rutzick

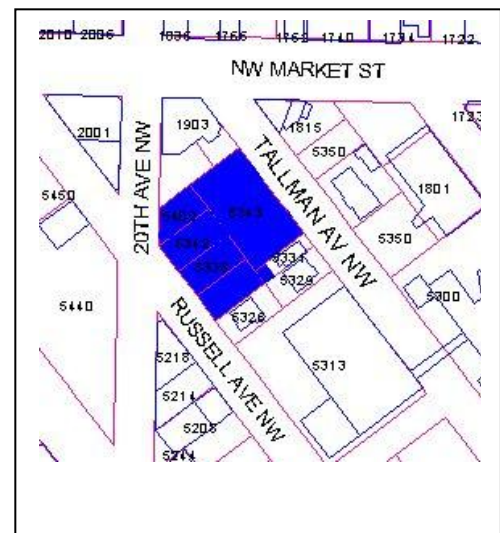
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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC3-85

Nearby Zones: North: NC3-85  
South: NC3-85  
East: MIO 65 NC3-85 and  
MIO 105 NC3 65  
West: C1 65

Lot Area: 37,000



**Current Development:** A one-story medical office building, a one-story industrial building, a one-story commercial building and surface parking lots.

**Access:** Tallman Avenue NW and Russell Ave NW

**Surrounding Development:** Uses directly adjacent to the site include the Swedish Medical Center on Tallman Ave NW (multiple five to six story buildings) to the east as well as a single story Wells Fargo Bank. Office and retail uses in a nonregistered historic style building to the NW are directly adjacent to the site (three stories zoned NC3- 85). A building with restaurant and retail uses is across 20th/Russell (single story zoned NC3P-65) next to the mixed use development on 20th (Canal Street Station-residential six stories zoned C1-65). Across Russell Ave NW is the Louisa local landmark historic brick building with retail uses (two stories), rear entries to FOE assembly hall (two stories wood) and a single story CMU automotive shop (zoned C1-65). Directly adjacent to the southeast are two apartment buildings (three stories) and a single story home used as a hair salon (zoned NC3-85). Further to the SE is the Swedish parking garage with a skybridge across Tallman Ave NW (zoned MIO-65-NC3-65).

**ECAs:** None.

**Neighborhood Character:** The subject site is on the edge of the hospital Major Institution Overlay which has a medical office character, as well as being located on the edge of the strong commercial and historic character of Market Street that wraps around from the north to the west. Newer development is more varied from the traditional, older buildings of the neighborhood that tend to typically define the character.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project is for the design and construction of a mixed use building with approximately 240 residential units located above 14 ground level live/work units and 7,500 square feet of commercial use. All of the parking (approximately 288 stalls) for the proposed development is to be provided in a below grade garage that is accessed from both Tallman and Russell Avenues.

<b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: May 9, 2011</b>
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## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include a public access path along the north property line connecting Russell Ave with Tallman Ave.

The first scheme (Option A) showed an O-shaped configuration with an interior courtyard. Residential access would be from Russell Ave and commercial access from Tallman Ave. The north and south sides of the building would be pulled back. Live work units would be located at ground level along the north side of the building as well as along Russell Ave. Medical office use would be located at grade along Tallman Ave. This alternative would need a departure from the 80% of non-residential street frontage along 20th Avenue NW.

The second and preferred scheme (Option B) showed an O-shaped configuration with notches at the east and west facades and a more condensed courtyard space. No departures are requested with this alternative.

The third scheme (Option C) showed a double courtyard configuration with one in the center of the building and the second as three-sided and facing out to the east. No departures are requested with this alternative.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately three members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Noted that the design of the proposed development should stay in character of the neighborhood by being brick with a high quality appearance.
- Stated that the courtyard appears pinched and a shadow study would be helpful in considering how the lower units facing the courtyard would have solar access. Suggested the double courtyard scheme with the second, three sided courtyard facing out to the south to gain greater solar access (at least until the site to the south is developed). Solar access for the units and open spaces should be an important consideration. Questions the viability of the live/work units on the south side of the building. Noted that the medical office use may not need street frontage and perhaps this could be relocated? Suggested that modulation along the street is less critical given the wide rights-of-ways – would rather see this area given to enlarging the courtyard dimensions.

## **PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

The specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

## **A. Site Planning**

- A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics. The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed at length the building massing and how it could maximize light access to the residential units. The Board agreed that the design should acknowledge and maximize solar access, including the possibility of exploring differing building heights to allow greater light into the courtyard.

- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the different character of the streets on the east and west sides of the project and that the design should respond appropriately to each. The east side should relate more to the medical office uses across Tallman Avenue and the west side should respond more to the commercial and retail character of Russell Avenue.

- A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted the three types of entrances that are proposed: medical office, live/work and residential. The different types should be clearly differentiated and clearly identifiable for the intended user. The Board discussed the proposed live/work units along the south edge and recommended that the entry points to these units be secured, but distinctive.

- A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated that this site has many opportunities with regard to human activity and should harness the high volumes of pedestrian activity that already occur in close proximity to the site and endeavor to pull pedestrians to the site and further activate this block.

- A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board was particularly concerned with the transition between the live/work units and the sidewalk. The Board noted that these

units should strive towards an urban form and appearance with storefront windows, but also consider including a buffer area between the units and the sidewalk for landscaping or hardscape design that creates a transition that encourages the live/work uses to open up to the sidewalk and/or express the commercial aspects of the live/work use at the sidewalk level.

**A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated that they look forward to seeing greater information and details for the open spaces provided at grade and at the upper level courtyard.

**A-10 Corner Lots. Building on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted the tremendous potential of the building design to respond to the terminus views presented at both Russell (and the tip of the NW corner) and the northeast corner as seen from Market Street. Special attention should be given to the design and celebration of these corners. The Russell terminus should seek to draw people down the street towards the building.

<b>B. Height, Bulk and Scale</b>
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**B-1 Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility. Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk, and scale between anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed that the most successful massing option will be the alternative that maximizes light access to the most units. Towards this end, the Board suggested exploring different massing heights or erosion of the corner units to achieve better solar access into the courtyard areas. The Board did not state a preference for one of the massing alternatives because their overriding concern was maximizing the solar access to the courtyard and designing a courtyard configuration and size that would take full advantage of light to the units and courtyard space.

## **C. Architectural Elements and Materials**

- C-1 Architectural Context. New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the two most important views of the site are the terminus view down Russell Avenue to the site and from Market Street to the site. The design should harness these views to draw people towards the site and express the unique location.

- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials. Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed strongly encouraged a high quality material palette that responds to the dominant and character driven buildings of the neighborhood and nearby historic district. This is primarily masonry and brick.

- C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board strongly agreed that garage entrances should be minimized and the pedestrian streetscape given priority over the interruption of the pedestrian environment by the driveway. The Board also suggested that the design of the garage doors be carefully considered to provide visual interest at the sidewalk level.

## **D. Pedestrian Environment**

- D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board expressed interest in landscaped open space that is located at ground level at entry locations and along the street front that is visible to pedestrians. The Board was very supportive and interested in the through-block pathway along the north side and the 15-foot setback area for the live/work units along the south edge. The Board encouraged that these areas be well lit for safety. The Board also suggested exploration of a pathway design that cuts through the site using the courtyard open space.

- D-2 Blank Walls. Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the visibility of the south facing façade and the existing lower-scaled buildings to the south and noted that this façade should be treated with visual interest to alleviate the potential for blank walls. The eastern half of the south façade should be treated architecturally, while the western half should be treated architecturally and with landscaping. Secured access and lighting to the area along the south façade will also be important elements to consider and design.

- D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas. Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that all service needs should be provided for within the building.

- D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board focused on the proposed public pathway through the block along the north side of the site, as well as the setback area along the south side of the site, abutting the ground level live/work units. Both of these areas should be well-lit and include transparency or other elements to encourage visibility to and from these spaces to increase safety. The area along the south should be secured.

- D-11 Commercial Transparency. Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board felt that the live/work units should express a strong retail appearance with transparency, large storefront windows, opportunities for signage and individual expression, as well as other features that are associated with commercial uses. The Board expressed concern with the live/work units that are depressed from the sidewalk grade and agreed that the design of the commercial appearance of these units will be a critical challenge they hope to see addressed at the next meeting.

- D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions.** For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

See A-6. The Board specifically noted that overhead weather protection should be provided and used to create identifiable entrances.

<b>E.     <b>Landscaping</b></b>
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- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site.** Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed at length the solar and shade impacts of the proposed structure and the need to better understand these impacts and designing the landscaping and hardscaping accordingly.

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departures were requested:

- 1. Street Level Development Standards (SMC 23.47A.008):** The Code requires a maximum of 20% of residential uses at street level. The applicant proposes to possibly exceed this percentage.

The Board indicated potential support for such a departure request provided that the design of the ground level live/work uses possess a strong commercial retail character per the guidance provided under A-6 and D-11.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

**At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forwards to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.**